

College of Veterinary Medicine makes history with inaugural class of 122 students

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After seven years in the making, on Aug. 11 the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) celebrated its completion with a ribbon cutting and the introduction of its 122-person inaugural class.

A-State's College of Veterinary Medicine is the first in Arkansas and we are only the eighth college in the country to host both a vet school and medical school on its campus.

The CVM building is a \$33.2 million investment which holds 56,000 square feet of laboratories, classrooms, clinical spaces and training suites.

History Constructed

"This building represents Arkansas State's continued commitment to serving the people of the state of Arkansas," said interim chancellor Calvin White at the opening ceremony.

"As a public research university, we have a responsibility to address the needs of our state and to prepare graduates who will make a meaningful difference where they are needed most," White said.

The event was monumental enough for the state of Arkansas that Jonesboro became the state capital for the day. Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders even made an appearance at the ribbon cutting.

During the ceremony, she said the vet school exists because it's something Arkansas needs.

"We grow nearly half of the rice in America. We are one of the great poultry and cattle states in the country, and in too much of rural Arkansas, there are not enough veterinarians



Photo by Allie Carson | Editor-In-Chief

Members of the inaugural class of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Arkansas State University pose for a photo during the ribbon cutting ceremony. As part of the 2030 class, 46 members are Arkansas natives while the remaining 76 students represent 35 other states and two countries outside of the United States of America. Arkansas native, Katie Kasserman, was one of the keynote speakers and spoke on behalf of her historical class.

to care for the animals that feed this nation, or the pets and wildlife that make life here what it is. That is a gap that this college was built to close," Sanders said.

Because agriculture is the largest industry in Arkansas, bringing in more than \$25.6 billion to the state's economy each year, animal health is vital to the state's economy.

According to total.vet, Arkansas has the least number of veterinarians in the country per 100,000 people, with only 14. South Dakota has the most with 48.

Leaders at vet school hope to close that gap and have more veterinarians employed in the

state of Arkansas.

The inaugural class held their orientation in the newly finished building on Aug. 6 before beginning classes the day after the ribbon cutting was held.

Within the 122-person inaugural class, 46 are Arkansans and the remaining 76 represent 35 other states and two countries outside of the United States.

Paragould native Katie Kasserman, is one of those 46 Arkansans. Kasserman, the first admitted student of the inaugural class, represented the student body as one of the keynote speakers at the ribbon cutting.

"For those of us that grew up right here in Arkansas, this moment is going to hit a little closer to home, Kasserman said. "We know what it's like to look at our family farms, our local clinics, our rural communities, knowing that we wanted to serve them, but thinking that we had to leave them behind to get our education. But today, that changes," she said.

Community Partners

While the vet school building was under construction on the main A-State campus, two new barns have also been in the works on Aggie. One is for bovine and the other for equine. Both facilities are scheduled to

open this fall.

Two years ago there were only two CVM faculty members, but as of the ribbon cutting, the college's leadership was filled with 19 faculty and 11 staff.

Through the multi-year process, Heidi Banse served as the inaugural dean of the college and will continue to do so, giving the students in the program hands-on experience in the field.

"We are here to serve the needs of our community, and we rely on our community to make sure that our students have the hands-on experiences they need, and so we're incredibly grateful to our community partners that have made this possible," Banse said.

There are multiple partners both across the state and in the city of Jonesboro who have partnered with the CVM to provide hands-on learning to the students in this class and those who follow.

Partners include the 150 veterinary practices in Arkansas, Tennessee and Missouri, Arkansas Game and Fish, the Northeast Arkansas Humane Society, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture and the Department of Agriculture.

Home for college

With the creation of the CVM, White said A-State has become a destination campus.

"If you want to be a vet and you don't want to leave the state now, this is where you come. Even as an undergraduate, we're going

to have a pathway that can accelerate your time as an undergraduate and leave in your junior year if you academically qualify to become a first year vet student, and if you finish the first year curriculum, they will go back and award you your undergraduate degree, so we're extremely excited about that," White said.

The chairman of the Board of Trustees, Bishop Robert Rudolph said the vet school will help many achieve their dreams of becoming a veterinarian, especially those from Arkansas, and that's what's important about higher education.

"Maybe they wondered whether there was a place for them, and so now we can say that there really is a place for them here at Arkansas State University. And that's what higher education is all about. It's about opening doors. It's about creating opportunities. It's about taking somebody's potential and giving them the preparation to do something with it," Rudolph said.

Although the ribbon cutting of the vet school was a monumental college for the Arkansas as a whole, systems president Todd Shields said what matters the most about the day is what's going to happen inside.

"Here, future veterinarians will discover their calling, faculty will advance knowledge, and graduates will strengthen communities across Arkansas," Shields said.



Photo by Allie Carson | Editor-In-Chief

From left, Senior Associate Dean Len Frey, CVM Dean Heidi Banse, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Interim Chancellor Calvin White Jr., and System President Todd Shields pose for a photo at the College of Veterinary Medicine ribbon cutting ceremony on a historic day for Arkansas. The ceremony featured six keynote speakers including Shields, White, chairman of the Board of Trustees Bishop Robert Rudolph, Banse, member of the inaugural class Paragould Native Katie Kasserman, and Sanders.

